

The Birthday of the King

Christmas Eve is a Holy Eve. The Season of Advent is now over and Christmas preparation is everywhere. So much to be done and the time so short. All must be finished before we all leave to go to the Church for Midnight Mass. Mother is busy cooking the Christmas goodies, and she is ever so busy dusting and trying to keep the house in order. Father is attending to the Christmas tree, and all entangled with the tree lights and ornaments. The smell of cedar is all over the house, and what a wonderful smell it is. In the place of honor in our home, we have just placed a beautiful little Manger, where we will all gather to celebrate the Birthday of our King. Nothing must be left out: the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, the ox, and the ass and the little sheep. Everything must be in place. The Baby Jesus is not yet to be seen. That comes later.

Not long before leaving for Mass, Father blesses the Christmas tree, and then goes to bless the Little Crib. The littlest child of the family places the Baby Jesus in His Crib, and all of us go up to give Him the loving presents we have been working on since the beginning of Advent: our sacrifices and our prayers and our acts of love and all the rest. Then we all leave for Church, where a special kind of quiet enchantment is all in the air. The Church is all dark, and tiny red vigil candles burn everywhere. The choir is singing the usual carols, and, finally, the moment arrives when a small child brings in the New Born Jesus and places Him in the Crib waiting to receive Him. For endless generations all mankind has been waiting for this precious moment. Now it is here at last, and yet again.

After Mass, we all go home, but the wondrous mysteries of Holy Mass continue to fill the hearts and minds of us all - even the tiny ones. As soon as we open our front door, we look upon our own little Crib, and as we enter our front door, we bring in with us the warmth and loveliness of the Church. Our own little Crib makes it all so much more wonderful, for it tells us that in truth we have received God's Love: Jesus Christ our King. Then it is that we all feel the true meaning of Christmas and of a very Holy Moment wherever little children, and grown ups too, still believe in the coming of the Baby Jesus. Once in the house and having said our prayers at the Crib, Father opens the door and we see the beautiful Christmas tree, all-sparkling and brilliant with lights and ornaments. Under the tree are the many gifts that were placed there by Santa Claus while we were all at Mass. After all the toys have been tried and all the boxes opened, we all enjoy hot chocolate and cookies. Then everybody goes to bed, and the little children all snug in their beds dream of Baby Jesus, and toys and Sugarplum Fairies, and Santa Claus and reindeer, and all kinds of splendrous things.

Next morning we all gather around to play, and we make all kinds of children noises around the Crib, and the Baby Jesus smiles as we play, and Mary and Joseph smile, too. All praise to the New Born King, more beautiful than anything this earth has ever seen. This is a truly Catholic Christmas, and this is the way it was when I was a little boy.

I knew it was the Birthday of Jesus, and I loved Jesus very much. I knew that the Sugarplum Fairies and Santa Claus and all other enchanting figurines were for a purpose. I knew they were only figurines, and I knew that they were used to further celebrate the Occasion. I knew it was The Birthday of the King! I knew and I loved, because my Father and Mother knew and loved, and I could feel in my little child's heart how their love and knowledge atmosphered the entire household. I could see that when it all came together it fashioned a Day which the Lord had made. There was a peace about that day which no other day of the year ever gives. There was a wonderful beauty about that day that stood above all the other days in my child's world. What a tragedy it is when parents rob their little children of the Christmas wonderment in all of its fullness.

Now I am an old man and I live in a Monastery, but every year at this time, the same thing happens in my heart, and each year this wondrous Mystery becomes ever more wondrous and beautiful, and each year I more fully realize that there is no reality outside the Vision of this Eternally Blessed Child. How incredibly wondrous is a truly Catholic Christmas?

*If we keep the Vision in our hearts and minds,
we need have no fear about
our customary*

*Christmas preparations ~ ~
they will be in proper focus!*

